I felt compelled again to pull together another collection of posts.

I don't know whether it will be a zine or something else.

The topic that I discerned was fear and pain.

And I certainly am not an expert on those topics either psychologically, spiritually, or experientially.

I am just a regular guy who likes to talk a lot and finds that AI is more patient with my verbal vomit than long-suffering humans.

In any event, fear and pain, as I was thinking about it, there might be some kind of interlocking relationship.

It's almost like pain is what we fear and we try to avoid pain or I try to avoid pain.

Let me make it clear here that I'm not a saint either.

Anything that I've learned is the hard way and I've certainly got blind spots and logs in my eyes, but it's almost like the fear of pain causes more pain.

So we're afraid of pain and because we're afraid of pain, we try to avoid the pain and I could use a symbol here, a symbol of addiction.

That could be addiction to substances, although thankfully I don't have that particular cross, but we could be addicted to blogging, we could be addicted to shopping, we could be addicted to spending, we could be addicted to accomplishment.

But at the essence of life, is death, is pain, and my humble understanding is that the only way to deal with pain without making more pain is to accept it.

To avoid resistance, to surrender, and the ultimate symbol, although it's more than a symbol, the ultimate symbol of non-resistance to pain is Jesus' crucifixion, his lynching, his gas chamber asphyxiation, torturous, vicious brutal execution by the state.

Egged on by religion.

Jesus' brutal death.

That is the symbol of pain, because it is God himself taking the hit for us, and it is God himself becoming one of us and revealing the human condition, allowing his own children to execute him.

In our pain, we are offered the opportunity of Christ's Way with a capital W.

The way of Christ allows us to have our own pain transfigured by connecting it with Christ's pain. Or more accurately by coming to understand that our pain is already transfigured, is already connected to Christ's pain.

God, the Father, allowed his own son to be tortured in order to explain to us in a demonstrated way how much he loves us, so our pain is already transfigured as part of Christ's pain.

It has meaning because of Christ's pain, and the Gospel in part is about coming to see that reality, and coming to be so mystically and practically, and at a gut-wrenching everyday level, becoming aware of the palpable presence of our Father, our Heavenly Father who is in the trenches with us.

I mean, you have to say that getting executed on a cross is pretty far into the trenches.

I don't think it's all the way.

I think there are people that suffer more than Christ did.

I really do, and I think that they are going to be resurrected more than Christ is, and Christ is going to be glad for that because he is already stooped low.

Christ has already made himself as low as possible.

He came down from heaven metaphorically, existentially.

That might be controversial, but I think it's a lot less controversial than trying to tell people who are in deep despair that their despair is less than Christ, especially if they don't think it is.

I'm not saying everybody's pain is **more** than Christ's pain, but I do believe that it's possible for a human to have more pain than Christ did.

I'm sure you could gin up some kind of theological gymnastics to say that there are some other labels put on pain rather than experience or something, but here's the bottom line.

Our pain connects us to Christ.

I'm not saying that I would have set up the world this way.

That's a ridiculous question.

That is a logical contradiction.

That's a non-starter question, but it doesn't even matter.

That's theological gymnastics.

My experience is that I have found a life ring in Christ in the midst of my existential drowning, and what that has showed me is that my pain, our pain, is connected with Christ's pain.

And that we can realize that and that we can experience our Father in heaven through that demonstration, that demonstration of Christ's solidarity, of God's solidarity with us.

And once we get that, once we get that, once we get that we are co-crucified with Christ, there's nothing the SOBs can do against us anymore.

They can't do anything against us.

The bosses, the disgruntled family members, the government, death itself, nothing can touch us because the more they try to hurt us, the closer we get to Christ.

And it doesn't mean that our pain is taken away, but it means our joys increase.

That's a paradoxical reality in Christ that joy and pain are not opposites.

They can coexist.

In fact, they do coexist.

And so whatever they do to us, whether they try to increase our fear or our pain, we know that they can't kill us.

They can't kill us existentially.

They can't kill us spiritually.

Ultimately, they can make us want to be dead because our rescue is not dependent on us.

It is dependent on God, the jaws of life, as I have described him, intervening.

It's not a neat, Hallmark movie, Bodhisattva, although I do respect Buddhists.

It is not an elegant experience.

It is a brutal rescue that involves lots of drama and despair and messiness and cutting away and scraping and burning away.

But it's not dependent on us.

God will burn off all the bullshit on his children so that they can see how much he loves them as personified and demonstrated in the cross a brutal execution by God's own children of God himself.

And so ultimately, if we face that, if we realize that, if we abide in our pain as a way to transcend it, as a way to not run away from it, as a way to see it as glue that holds us closer to Christ, then no longer can we fear.

Because what can they do, what can make us afraid?

Pain, right?

What else can one be afraid of but pain?

I could be wrong here.

I'd love to get feedback.

But as I sit here in the armchair and try to reflect on this briefly before I go do my next fatherly duty, it seems like that anything that could cause us fear is ultimately a species of pain.

And if pain connects us to Christ more deeply, then game set match, we have won.

Christ has won.

And there's nothing the sons of bitches can do to us.

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